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## THE PROFESSIONAL INSERTION OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC MARGINALIZED GROUPS A SPECIFIC ROLE FOR THE CAREER COUNSELOR

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**Abstract:** *Career counseling is a new and continuously growing field in Romania. It promotes concepts and patterns of intervention previously used under the name of professional integration counseling. This paper proposes a new perspective on the career counseling process, switching the optics towards a new target group, the socially marginalized people. The intervention in these special cases has its own characteristics which propose themselves as challenges for the career counseling process as previously conceived. This specific group of people asking for career counseling could be common clients for every career counselor. Therefore, the career counselor should be ready in dealing with their specific issues.*

**Keywords:** *career, counselor, marginalization, insertion, disadvantage people*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The professional activity is conceived as a personal identity component in many cultures. For many people the meaning of their work contribute to the quality of their lives and also fulfill their need for self development. Therefore, the unemployment period in every working person life is a difficult one and sometimes specific intervention or psychological support is needed. From this point of view, the unemployment period is a social exclusion one. Only in this context we understand why people exposed to socio-economic exclusion for different reasons, undergoing a long period of unemployment, have multiple reasons to feel excluded from society.

The intervention programs addressing the issues of this target groups focus on social categories like:

- disabled people
- teenagers leaving the protection system

- teenagers in the probation system
- ethnic minorities
- sexual minorities
- females
- homeless people
- people recently released from prison

The common career counseling process approach stresses the multicultural issues mostly in an international context [2]. If we consider each of these social groups as a mini specific culture, we better understand the meaning of multicultural sensitivity as a prerequisite of performing as a career counselor.

The main purposes of any professional integration support process addressing the issues of such groups are double: the professional insertion on one hand, and empowerment of these persons, on the other hand.

## **2. STAGES TO BE FOLLOWED IN THE INTERVENTION PROCESS**

Any career counseling process is structured on some specific steps that are to be followed in approaching the client's needs.

We list and discuss below these steps, focusing on the specific intervention for the social marginalized clients.

1. Getting in contact with the client. This first step should clarify the career counselor about the client's motivation to participate in such a support process and the ways he/she took this decision. In many cases, this is the first time the client speaks with the career counselor. In supporting the persons from marginalized groups, this stage could be specific for an initial discussion between an institutional representative and the career counselor. In the majority of cases, people from marginalized groups are referred for counseling by a social care service or institution. It is mandatory for the career counselor to assess in such situation the motivation for employment of the referred clients. Moreover, the counseling process has to take into consideration the conditions imposed or assured by the social care institution addressing the client from a marginalized group. Significantly related to this situation is the quality of the counselor-client relation to be build during the counseling process.
2. Assessment of the personal and professional potential of the client. According with the needs for counseling identified by the counselor in accord with the client, the assessment uses formal and nonformal evaluation tools. Sometimes, the purpose of this stage is to support the client to know himself/herself better, to become more aware of his/her own abilities, interests, competencies. This is an important gain for the client helping him/her better orientate in his/her professionals search. In some

cases, this stage is focused on specific professional competencies that are to be investigated in order to better orientate the client toward a field of activity or another, or toward a job or another.

3. Setting the objectives for intervention. The immediate result of the assessment stage is providing the counselor and the client with a lot of information about the resources the client has in order to conceive the objectives of intervention that would meet the client's needs, either identified by the counselor or declared by the client. Specific for people coming from marginalized groups are objectives like: personal acceptance, developing social and communication skills in relation with other people or institutions, independent life skills, time or personal budget management skills. More common for any career counseling process are objectives like training for the employment interview, development of the ability to write a CV or a motivation letter, or to identity the job announcements.
4. Once the agreement upon the objectives is established, the next natural step is to conceive an action plan including the objectives previously established, the timeline for fulfilling them, the obstacles envisaged and the resources allocated. It is important to establish the action together with the client and thus being assured about the involvement of the client in an action plan that he/she have designed for his/herself.
5. Implementation of the action plan. This is the process in which the client is guided by the counselor to fulfill the objectives established. In this stage, the relation between the two partners, the counselor and the client, is important in order to ensure the support necessary for the client to undergo this stage. One specific step for the intervention with the marginalized groups is the monitoring post insertion.



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In each and every stage of the support process, the career counselor uses specific instruments and documents in order to gather and store information about the client.

Some specific characteristics of this group of people focusing on the differences among common clients and people from socially marginalized groups are to be mentioned:

1. The clients coming from socially marginalized groups are referred to the career counselor by a care organization, private or public. In the majority of cases, there is a specialist responsible with the case management of the intervention process for that person. In these cases, the sending organization pays for the counseling services.
2. The career counselor collaborates in an intervention network with the case manager from the sending organization, and also with other specialists in professional integration from partners' organization. This is a context influencing the conception of the action plan, as it should take into consideration the situation of the client as a person benefitting from a free social care service at the "sending" organization.
3. In the case of career counseling with marginalized people, the career counselor acts sometime as an employment negotiator with the potential employer and sometimes, as a mediator and an agent of mentality changes. Unlike the common career counseling process, in the support process for marginalized persons, the career counselor contacts and meets the employer with every occasion. The

purpose of the meeting is to present the employer the candidates, to explain their situation, to make sure that the employer would make efforts to support the insertion of the new employee at the work place. This is a significant role for the career counselor as he/she has to build a partnership with the employer in the benefit of the candidate. This is, in most of the cases, a condition for the new employee to succeed in maintaining the newly obtain job placement. For instance, the counselor has to be sure that the employer will make efforts to control the other employees' reaction when they are facing the possibility to work with a motor disabled person. This professional insertion also request specific access transformation in terms of adapted bathrooms and platforms for the wheelchairs.

4. In this specific case of intervention, the post placement monitoring stage is very important. The difficulty of these peoples is not only to obtain a job, but also to maintain it and to adapt to its requests.
5. The client is always in the center of the support process. The process is always an individual approach, considering the client past, specific difficulties, personal and professional history, professional and personal interests.
6. Each decision regarding the support process is taken by the career counselor considering in the first place the client benefit.

7. The evaluation process focuses on the resources and the potential of the person, not on the deficits.
8. The support process is conducted by the counselor activating in an interdisciplinary team. The specialists working in team could be: social workers, psychologists, vocational instructors, soft skills educators.
9. Probably more than in a common counseling process, in the support process with socio-economic marginalized persons, the unconditional acceptance principle is more significant [1]. This is an attitude that helps the career counselors to build the counseling relation and to genuinely support this type of client to find and maintain a workplace.

### **3. CONCLUSIONS**

This specific intervention model results from our practices in the field of professional

insertion of multiple socio-economic disadvantaged groups, as we have mentioned above. Our approach in this paper is to reframe the career counseling process as it is described and understood by professional associations and by the business field, in the light of the characteristics of professional insertion services for disadvantaged people. This is a particular approach that finds its roots in the same set of principles that guide the support services. Moreover, career counselor are to be preoccupied by being able to address whenever necessary the specific issues of these disadvantaged people looking for a job.

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